

# The Bandera PROPHEET

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City declines to substantiate complaint against council member

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In response to a complaint filed against one of their colleagues, Bandera City Council members voted against substantiating the claim.

Steve Childers, of the Flying L Public Utility District, submitted the formal complaint against Council Member Darcy Hasty in December, alleging she was disruptive during a PUD business meeting while acting on behalf of the city. Waiving the option to deliberate in closed session whether she violated the city's code of conduct, Hasty chose to have the Jan. 18 discourse open to the public.

"I was never introduced as a city council member at a PUD meeting. I cannot control how other people see me," Hasty said. "I repeatedly stated I was there as a concerned citizen...I have done nothing wrong." Council Member Jerry Russe said city officials must clearly state they do not represent their board or body of government, in accordance with City Code Section 1.03.255, which states, "the professional and personal conduct of city officials and employees shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other city officials and employees, board, commission, and committee members and the public."

"One of the main things that sticks with me is the advocacy. I have been instructed that we need to be very explicit that we are speaking as a citizen, not a council member," Russe said.

Many people in attendance, who stated they oppose the PUD's actions, spoke in favor of Hasty, urging council to exonerate her.

“I had five or six people in this room saying I never represented myself as a member of city council,” Hasty said. “Is it common knowledge that I am a member of city council? Absolutely it is. I was there on my own behalf.”

Council Member Toni Kunz said the community was clearly divided, and a council member was at the center of it.

“They believed that she was there representing city council... We have been submitted letters and people came to speak, the perception of who she was and who she was representing is all over the board,” Kunz said. “She felt as though she did enough to clarify she was not representing council. Apparently it was not enough. There was perception that you were representing council, and that disturbs me.”

Mayor Suzanne Schauman said she concurred with Kunz, but did not believe there was any action council should take. She said Hasty, and all council members, were well known throughout the community. If nothing else, Schauman said, they needed to think more carefully about their public attendance.

“This is a really difficult position for you as well as all of us,” Council Member Rebeca Gibson said. “You are really an incredibly good advocate. But we all know we have to walk a thin line... I think we need to get down to how we move forward from here.”

Gibson’s motion that Hasty was not in violation of city code carried, with Russe opposed. Hasty abstained from the vote.

“It might do the entire council well to organize a code of ethics conduct workshop or training so that we can move forward with the rules we enacted,” Gibson said.